

Watervliet Arsenal
Officers' Quarters
(Quarters 4)
Mordecai Drive west of Mettler Road
Watervliet
Albany County
New York

HABS No. NY-5521D

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WATERVLIET ARSENAL
OFFICERS' QUARTERS
(Quarters 4)

HABS No. NY-5521D

Location: Mordecai Drive west of Mettler Road,
Watervliet Arsenal,
Watervliet,
Albany County, New York.

USGS Troy South Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 18.605989.4730560

Present Owner: U.S. Army

Present Occupant: Quarters 4A: Lt. and Mr. Morris
Quarters 4B: Lt. and Mrs. M. Browne
Quarters 4C: Maj. and Mrs. Paul Ihrke

Present Use: Family housing - officer

Significance: The building is an intact integral element of the officers' family housing area developed at the north side of the arsenal during the nineteenth century to house the installation's highest ranking officers.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The date of construction given in the arsenal's 1910 historical report (Stephenson) is 1867, but no further documentation substantiating this date was located.
2. Architect: Not known. The building was probably designed by Ordnance Department personnel.
3. Original and subsequent owners: U.S. Army
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Not known.
5. Original plans and construction: No original plans or drawings were located, but two sources, a drawing dated c. 1876 (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-11) and a photograph taken about 1875 (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-8), document the early plan and appearance. The building appears to have originally consisted of two quarters. The west quarters, the larger of the two, contained the building's central hall with a stairway along its east wall. The portions of the quarters located in the rear ell were

essentially mirror images. The plan was published in Officers' Quarters at the Arsenals and Armory, a copy of which is in the collection of the Watervliet Arsenal Museum.

The photograph of the exterior shows a two-story, five-bay by five-bay main block. A balustrade surrounded the deck of its hip roof. Small one bay porches marking the main entrances to the two quarters were centrally located on the south and east elevations, and a rectangular, two-story ell with larger porches projected to the north. The photograph is also in the museum's collection.

6. Alterations and additions: About 1886, a two-story, flat-roofed, polygonal bay was constructed on the east elevation of the main block at the north end. The triangular, pedimented lintels from the original construction appear to have been reused on the east side of the bay while less elaborate triangular lintels like those on the rear ell were placed above the remaining windows. The alteration is documented by two drawings in the arsenal's Engineering Division. The first of these (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-12), dated August 11, 1886, illustrates what appears to have been two proposals for the bay. The second drawing (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-13), dated October 18, 1886, illustrates the accepted proposal.

At an undetermined date a second projecting bay was added to the house. Constructed across the first two bays of the south elevation, it is two stories high and has a flat roof. The east and west walls are slightly angled narrowing toward the south. Again the pedimented lintels were reused on the principal elevation of the bay. Two photographs in the museum's collection (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-9 and HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-10) document this alteration. Construction of the bay added a third room to the first floor and additional closet space on the second floor.

A one-story porch wrapping around the west, south, and east sides of the house was added at an undetermined date. The small, one-bay entrance porches on the south and east sides were presumably removed when the larger porch was built.

Since its construction, various other changes have been made to the exterior. The first story window opening east of the principal door on the south elevation has been bricked in, and the adjacent window replaced with a door. The rear doors at the center of the north elevation have been replaced with windows,

and a door was inserted in the window opening to the west. A window opening on the west side of the building at the juncture of the main block and ell was enlarged to incorporate a door leading to Quarters 4A.

Few changes occurred on the interior of the building until 1959, when it was divided into three quarters. Space from both Quarters 4A (west) and 4C (east) was used to form the new unit. No contemporary alteration drawings documenting this change were located.

B. Historical Context:

Probably constructed in 1867, this building is one of five quarters erected at the north side of the arsenal during the nineteenth century to house the installation's highest ranking officers. By 1900 the house had fallen into disrepair because it had remained vacant for a number of years. Repairs were made, and the quarters were reoccupied (Annual Report of the War Department, 1900, p. 63). The building has remained officers' family housing since that time. (For further documentation see HAER No. NY-1A.)

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Although altered with the addition of bays and a large wrap-around porch, this two-story, hip-roofed building exhibits the more restrained character and classical detailing of the quarters built nearby 30 years earlier.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in good condition and is well maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The main block of this nearly rectangular building measures approximately 43' (south) x 44' with bays on the southwest and northeast corners. The rear ell measures approximately 37' x 51'. The main block and ell are two stories high with attic and basement.
2. Foundations: Foundations are coursed ashlar.
3. Walls: Walls are brick laid in 5/1 common bond painted gray. Brick pilasters accent the corners of the main block and the rear corners of the ell.

4. Structural system, framing: Walls are load bearing about 16" thick. Trusses are heavy timber, and rafters are approximately 3 1/2" x 6" set 20" on center.
5. Porches, stoops: A screened, one-story porch wraps around the west, south, and east sides of the building. Thirteen thin tapered Doric columns support the roof, and a plain wood balustrade encircles the wood deck. Rafters are exposed in the ceiling. Access is by three sets of steps with metal pipe or plain wood railing on the north, south, and east sides of the porch.

A rectangular porch with wood deck, four paneled columns, a plain wood balustrade, and flat roof is located at the east entrance to the ell directly north of the main block. A similar screened porch is located at the west entrances to the ell. A small stoop with plain balustrade is on the north side at the rear entrance to Quarters 4C, and a straight-run metal fire escape with metal pipe railing leads to the second floor entrance to the quarters.

6. Chimneys: Two interior brick chimneys with corbelled brick caps rise south of the ridge on the main block. On the rear ell, a similar brick chimney is set east of the ridge, and a plain brick chimney is north of the ridge.
7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors:

Quarters 4A: The main entrance on the south side is a set of double-leaf, vertical-paneled, wood and glass doors with a transom and triangular, pedimented stone lintel. The kitchen door at the west side of the ell is glazed wood with a three-light transom and plain, triangular, stone lintel.

Quarters 4B: The main entrance is a glazed paneled wood door with three-light transom on the west side of the ell. On the north elevation, there are glazed wood doors on the first and second floors.

Quarters 4C: The main entrance on the east is a set of double-leaf, wood doors with a single-light transom. Additional entrances are double-leaf French doors with a single-light transom and triangular, pedimented, stone lintel on the south side of the main block and a paneled wood door with a three-light transom on the east side of the ell.

- b. Windows: Typical windows are one-over-one-light, double-hung wood sash with stone lug sills. On the main block, with the exception of the east and west sides of the south bay and the north and south sides of the east bay, windows have triangular, pedimented, stone lintels. Remaining windows have plain, triangular, stone lintels.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The main block roof is an asphalt shingled truncated hip with a large metal ventilator at the center. The ell roof is a shallow hip covered with asphalt shingles. Roofs on the bays are flat.
- b. Cornice, eaves: A molded brick cornice encircles the building below boxed wood eaves. The cornice forms capitals for the pilasters.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: The interior is divided into three quarters: 4A occupies the west side of the main block and the south corner of the ell; 4B covers the northwest two-thirds of the ell on the first and second floors and the northeast corner of the ell on the second floor; on the east side, 4C extends the length of the main block and ell on the first floor and the length of the main block and the south half of the ell on the second floor. (See supplemental material, floor plans)
 - a. Basement: The basement under the main block has a central hall with three rooms on the east and west sides. Only those rooms under Quarters 4A open off the hall. The ell contains four rooms, two each under Quarters 4A and 4C.
 - b. First floor:
 - Quarters 4A: The main entrance leads to a hall which contains the stairs. The living room, library, and dining room open off the west side of the hall. The kitchen and service stairs are located in the ell north of the hall. (See supplemental material, floor plans)
 - Quarters 4B: The west entrance opens to a small vestibule with stairs on its east side. To the north is the living room, then a narrow hall with the kitchen and dining room on the west and closets on the east. A small bathroom occupies the northeast corner adjacent to the dining room. (See supplemental material, floor plans)

Quarters 4C: In the main block, the east entrance opens to a stair hall with the stairs on the west, the living room on the south, and the dining room on the north. The ell contains a pantry, service hall with powder room, stairs, kitchen, laundry room, and a second hall leading to a bathroom and room in the north end. (See supplemental material, floor plans)

c. Second floor:

Quarters 4A: The plan in the main block corresponds closely to that of the first floor. The south end of the hall is partitioned off for a dressing room, and a bathroom and closets are set between the two southern bedrooms. In the ell, a large closet, bathroom, and stairs to the attic open off an L-shaped hall. (See supplemental material, floor plans)

Quarters 4B: The stairs lead to a hall along the east wall off which open a bathroom and bedroom on the west, a second bedroom in the northwest corner, and a third bedroom with bathroom on the east. (See supplemental material, floor plans)

Quarters 4C: The main stairs lead to a hall with bedrooms on the north and south. The hall turns west and then north to provide access to a bathroom, service stairs, and bedroom in the ell. (See supplemental material, floor plans)

d. Attic: The attic is divided between Quarters 4A and 4C by a brick wall. Each contains a single open room in the main block and one in the ell.

2. Stairways:

Quarters 4A: The main stairway between the first and second floors is a straight-run, open string with painted risers and varnished treads. The rounded newel post tapers upward. The balusters are set two per tread. The newel post and balustrade are painted brown. On the second floor, the balustrade curves to enclose the stair well. A curved stairway of similar design continues to the attic (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-5). In the ell, stairs to the basement and attic are enclosed, straight-run with painted treads and plain wood rails.

Quarters 4B: The stairway between the first and second floors is enclosed and has a modern wood rail.

Quarters 4C: The main stairway is U-shaped with painted, square, fluted newel posts; varnished, square balusters and rail; painted risers; and varnished treads. The service stairs in the ell are open straight-run with painted, rounded newel posts and turned balusters, and rail.

3. Flooring:

Quarters 4A: The living room floor is varnished basket weave, wood parquet with a darker fret border (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-4). Bathroom and kitchen floors are tile. Remaining floors on the first and second floors are varnished, narrow-width boards. Basement floors are concrete.

Quarters 4B: Kitchen and bathroom floors are tile. Remaining floors are varnished, narrow-width boards.

Quarters 4C: Floors in the first floor of the ell and upstairs bathrooms are tile. Remaining floors are varnished, narrow-width boards. Basement floors are concrete.

4. Wall and ceiling finish:

Quarters 4A: Living room walls are papered. The ceiling is plaster with a molded plaster cornice and frieze (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-4). Library walls are papered above a wainscot. Ceilings are plaster with a molded plaster cornice. Dining room and first and second floor stair halls are papered and have a plaster ceiling with a coved plaster cornice. Kitchen walls and ceiling are plaster. Bathroom walls are either papered or are plaster above a ceramic tile wainscot. Bedroom and service hall walls are papered. The ceiling of the bedroom in the northwest corner of the main block is painted pressed metal featuring curved linear forms in rectangular panels with bead and reel border and coved cornice. The ceiling in the main block bathroom is painted pressed metal consisting of plain square panels with bead and reel border and cove molding. The southwest bedroom ceiling is painted pressed metal with large squares, bead and reel surround, and an outer floral border. There are wide molded baseboards throughout the first and second floors.

Quarters 4B: Walls of major rooms are papered. Bathroom and kitchen walls have tile wainscotting. The bedroom in the

northwest corner has a painted pressed metal ceiling of square panels with dotted borders and an egg and dart cornice. Remaining ceilings are plaster or accoustical tile.

Quarters 4C: Walls of major rooms are papered and have wide molded baseboards. Kitchen and bathroom walls have ceramic tile wainscoting. The living room ceiling is painted pressed metal with square panels containing smaller squares surrounded by curvilinear forms. Ceilings in the remaining major rooms are plaster. The living room and dining room have prominent molded plaster cornices. Upstairs bedrooms have simpler plaster cornices. Ceilings in the bathroom and the room in the northeast corner are accoustical tile.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Typical doors in all three quarters are paneled with molded architrave surrounds.
- b. Windows: Typical windows in all three quarters have architrave trim. Most contain paneled or louvered shutters.

6. Decorative features and trim:

Quarters 4A: The fireplace set diagonally across the northwest corner of the living room is light gray marble with a round-arched opening, paneled spandrels, a cartouche in the center, and a molded mantel shelf. The opening is covered with a cast metal screen. The fireplace on the east wall of the dining room is similar.

Quarters 4C: Fireplaces on the west wall of the dining and living rooms (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-7) are similar to those in Quarters 4A. The fireplace on the east wall of the northwest bedroom is wood with a marble hearth. Attenuated columns flanking the opening rise to brackets with beaded trim which support a thin mantel shelf. A foliated panel is set at the center below the shelf.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating, air conditioning: The building is heated by steam with radiators throughout and the furnace in the basement. The building is cooled by central air conditioning.
- b. Lighting: Modern incandescent ceiling fixtures light the quarters.

c. Plumbing: Plumbing fixtures are modern.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Located south of the arsenal's northern boundary wall, the building faces south onto Mordecai Drive. It is surrounded by open spaces, curved tree-lined drives, and four additional family quarters. The arsenal's built-up industrial, maintenance, and administrative areas are located to the south and west.
2. Outbuildings: A one-story, hip-roofed, brick garage (Building 48) built in 1959 is situated northwest of the quarters.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

Basement, First, and Second Floor Plans. Published in Officers Quarters at the Arsenals and Armory. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1876. Copy available in the Watervliet Arsenal Museum. (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-11)

Assistant Officers' Quarters, East Side; Alterations, First and Second Floors. August 11, 1886. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division. (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-12) Illustrates proposals for bay addition to east side of building.

Assistant Officers' Quarters; Elevation and Plan of Bay Added to East Side, October 18, 1886. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division. (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-13) Documents bay addition.

Assistant Officers' Quarters; Basement, First, and Second Floor Plans. Undated. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division. (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-14)

Second Story Plan. July 31, 1918. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division.

First and Second Floor Plan for Quarters 4. December 29, 1941. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division.

Fire Escape and Porch for Quarters 4B. October 1956. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division.

B. Early Views:

South and east elevations before removal of roof balustrade and construction of porch and bays. Taken about 1875. Watervliet Arsenal Museum. (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-8)

South and east elevations following construction of the bays and porch. Undated. Watervliet Arsenal Museum. (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-10)

West and south elevations following construction of the bay and porch on the south side of the building. Undated. Watervliet Arsenal Museum. (HABS Photo No. NY-5521D-9)

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Stephenson, F. J. "Historical Sketch of Watervliet Arsenal." Watervliet, New York: Watervliet Arsenal, July 1, 1910. Record Group 156, Records of the Office of the Chief of Ordnance, Entry 30025-D, Subentry 227. Navy and Old Army Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Lists date of construction as 1867.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Building Technology, Inc. Historic Properties Report Watervliet Arsenal, Watervliet, New York and Rotterdam Family Housing Area, Rotterdam, New York. January 1985. The report and inventory cards for the arsenal are filed as field records in the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress under HAER No. NY-1A.

D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Records of the Office of the Chief of Ordnance, Record Group 156, and Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, Record Group 77, Navy and Old Army Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C. should be further investigated.

E. Supplemental Material:

First and Second Floor Plans, Officers Quarters, Building No. 4. No

date. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division. Current floor plans of the building.

Prepared by: Barbara E. Hightower
Historian
MacDonald and Mack Partnership
February 1985

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was part of a program initiated through a memorandum of agreement between the National Park Service and the U.S. Department of the Army. Stanley H. Fried, Chief, Real Estate Branch of Headquarters DARCOM, and Dr. Robert J. Kapsch, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, were program directors. Sally Kress Tompkins of HABS/HAER was program manager, and Robie S. Lange of HABS/HAER was project manager. Under the direction of William A. Brenner, Building Technology Incorporated, Silver Spring, Maryland, acted as primary contractor, and MacDonald and Mack Partnership, Minneapolis, was a major subcontractor. The project included a survey of historic properties at Watervliet Arsenal, as well as preparation of an historic properties report and HABS/HAER documentation for 17 buildings. The survey, report, and documentation were completed by Barbara E. Hightower, historian, Minneapolis. The photographs were taken by Robert A. Ryan and J Ceronie of Dennett, Muessig, Ryan, and Associates, Ltd., Iowa City, Iowa. Drawings were produced by Gary M. Louris, Minneapolis.

E. Supplemental Material
Floor Plan

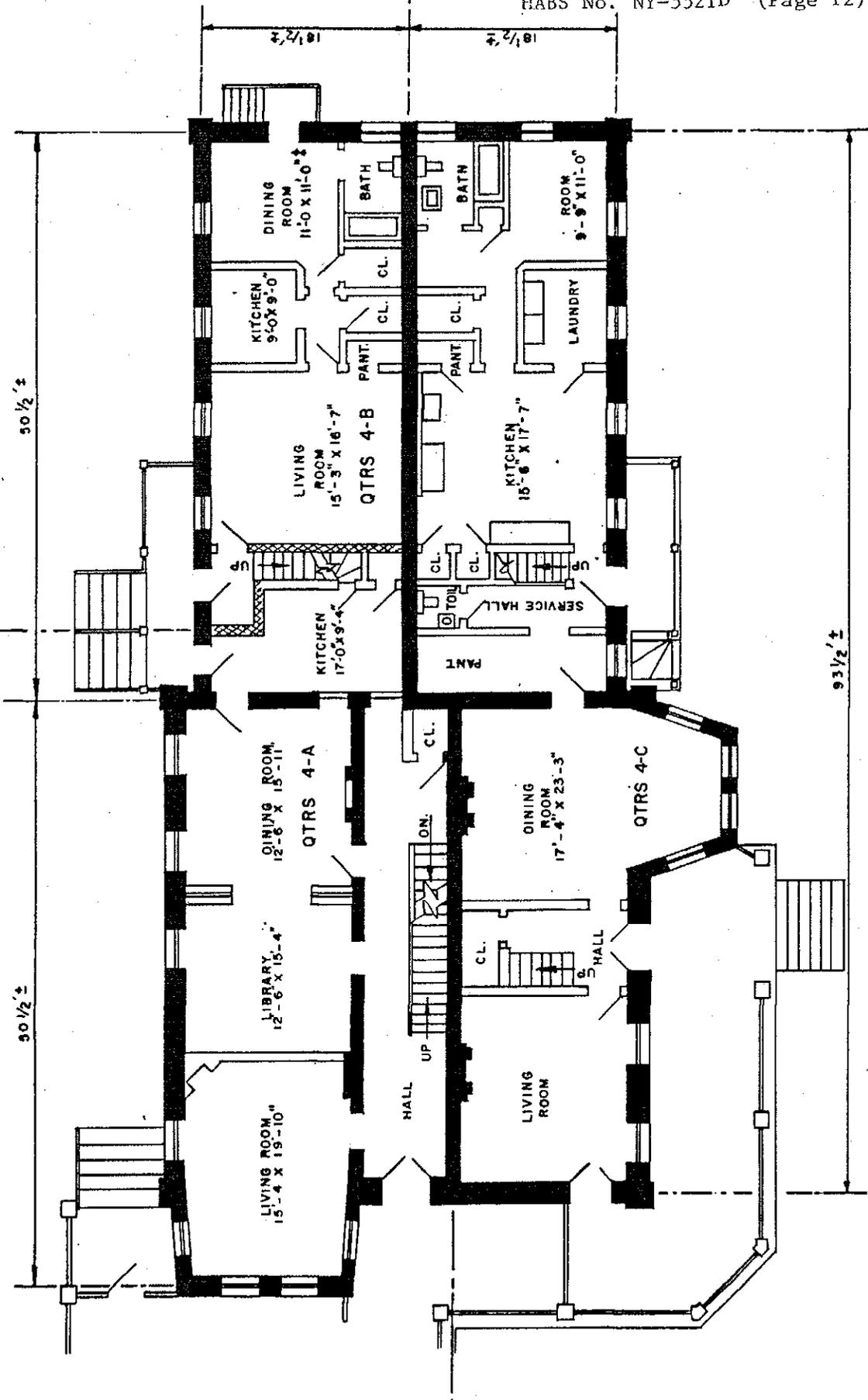
WATERVLIET ARSENAL
OFFICERS' QUARTERS
(Quarters 4)

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QUARTERS 4 B

QUARTERS 4 A

QUARTERS 4 C



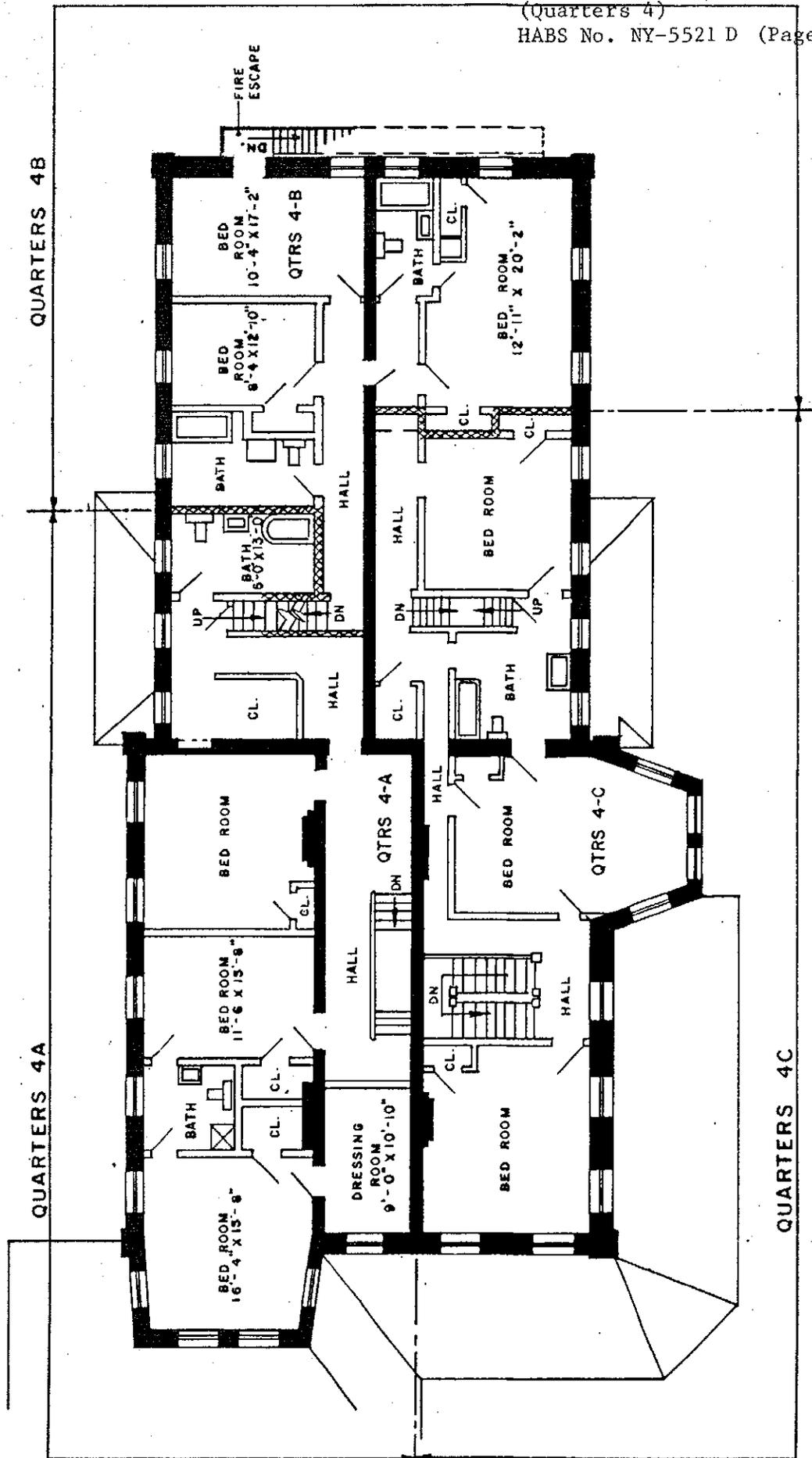
WATERVLIET ARSENAL
WATERVLIET, N.Y.

Drawn by: J.R. GANEM, A.E. App'd by: J. J. [Signature]
Date: 2/76
Revisions: EL

FIRST FLOOR PLAN
OFFICERS' QUARTERS
BUILDING NO. 4

NET FLOOR AREA
6910
Square feet
FLOOR CAPACITY
Per square foot

Scale: NO. SCALE Date:



WATERVLIET ARSENAL
WATERVLIET, N.Y.

Drawn by: J.R.GANGEMI, A.E. Appd by: *[Signature]* Date: 2/76

Revisions: 1 L

SECOND FLOOR PLAN
OFFICERS' QUARTERS
BUILDING NO. 4

Scale: NO. 3/4" = 1'-0" Date:

NET FLOOR AREA	6910
Square feet	
FLOOR CAPACITY	
Per square foot	